

The USDA - NASS - West Virginia Statistical Office in cooperation with the West Virginia Department of Agriculture presents this publication as a tribute to efforts of the West Virginia farm operators that have made it a reality. West Virginia agricultural producers' participation in and support of our surveys remains among the highest in the United States. We appreciate the valuable time numerous producers commit to providing the information through the Internet—electronic data reporting, completing and mailing questionnaires and participating in interviews with our field and office staff, which makes this publication and many of our other estimates possible. Additionally, agribusinesses, and personnel from the West Virginia Cooperative Extension Service, Farm Service Agency, and the Natural Resources Conservation Service provide timely agricultural information that ensures together we meet the demands of an evolving agricultural community. Working with and for the Agriculturalists of this great state is an honor. I take immense pride in the rural traditions and the collective heritage of West Virginia's farm communities.



Dale R. King
Director

A tradition that many rural West Virginians take pride in is the growing of their own fruits and vegetables. In fact, some producers market and sell their produce to vast national and international markets. The fruit industry, for instance, produced 90 million pounds of apples and 12.5 million pounds of peaches last year. Recently, our office conducted the 2004 Orchard and Vineyard survey to learn more about the fruit industry in West Virginia. Our published results were enlightening, yet disconcerting; many changes were discovered in the industry since a similar survey was completed in 1994. Comparing 2004 to 1994, commercial apple acreage declined 57%, from 9,949 to 4,258; number of trees declined 33%, from 745,400 to 499,000; the number of commercial growers was 135 in 1994, the number in 2004 was 67. Commercial peach acreage declined by one-half (1,968 to 971); number of trees declined 47% (173,000 to 91,700); the number of commercial growers in 1994 was 62 and in 2004 the number was 38. Fueled by population growth and the resulting demand for acreage - land values and the marketing economics of fruit production have contributed to more than significant challenges for our fruit producers.

While many agricultural sectors face similar challenges, the traditions of agriculture will remain a strong part of West Virginia's heritage. This publication will attest that agriculture is alive and thriving in the Mountain State. To ensure that agricultural traditions will be sustained in the future, it is vital that everyone in the agricultural community continue to educate our consumers as to the origin of their bountiful and readily available food supplies. Through education, children and adults alike may be reminded or learn that hamburgers come from cattle on a farm—not a fast food restaurant; bread from grain in the field—not the bakery; milk from a cow or goat—not a plastic or cardboard carton in the refrigerator and fruit and vegetables from the garden or farmers' fields—not the produce isle at the supermarket. Better yet, we need to enlighten our consumers that agricultural products make up many of the prepared foods they buy and that the United States of America has the safest, most abundant, and in terms of per capita expenditures, the most inexpensive food supply in the world.

Please use this publication as a tool in learning about and promoting agriculture. This is one of many statistical reports we publish about West Virginia agriculture. To learn more about our reports, visit our web site, www.nass.usda.gov/wv or contact us any time.